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City seeks to shut down Master Metals

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For the second time in a year, the city of Cleveland is seeking to shut down the furnaces at Master Metals Inc. — this time for continuing to emit "dangerously high" levels of lead into the air.

The complaint before Cleveland Housing Judge William H. Corrigan seeks to temporarily shut down the secondary lead-smelting company on W. 3rd St. until compliance with air-lead requirements can be insured.

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Gruber said that despite company improvements, air-lead levels remain "totally" unacceptable.

The complaint said levels of airborne lead particulates outside the plant in the first three months of this year were more than 10 times the federal standard and more than 10 times the level Master Metals agreed to in a 1992 consent agreement.

"We have plenty of problems in the city," said Gruber. "We shouldn't have to deal with the worst lead producer in the country here."

Richard Boylan, a lawyer for the company, declined to comment on the complaint.

Master Metals extracts lead from batteries and other materials through a smelting process and sells the lead. It has repeatedly been cited for environmental violations.

Last August, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency temporarily shut down the company for health-threatening violations of air standards that at the time were believed to be the worst levels of lead pollution recorded in the nation. The Ohio EPA later allowed the company to partially resume operations, but it

has not approved a return to full operation.

In the recent complaint, the city contends that Master Metals has failed to comply with air-lead standards agreed to with the city and ordered by the state EPA.

A hearing before Corrigan is slated for Tuesday, although the parties continue to negotiate.

Meanwhile, the director of the Ohio EPA will meet with his staff Monday to discuss the lead levels near Master Metals. Director Donald R. Schregardus could decide next week whether the company will be allowed to continue operating, said Ohio EPA spokeswoman Carol Porter.